

Sin and Its Conquerors



DEAN FARRAR, D.D.

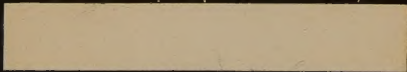
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LOGICAL SUMMARY

Sin and Its Conquerors

OR

The Conquest of Sin

By the Very Rev.

DEAN FARRAR



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I

GUILT

Preached in Westminster Abbey

“My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly, that there is no fear of God before his eyes; for he flattereth himself in his own sight until his abominable sin be found out.”—PSALM xxxvi. 1, 2.

THE word “guilt,” like the German “schuld,” means a debt. It is derived from the Anglo-Saxon verb “gildam,” to pay. How natural the metaphor is we may see from the fact that our Lord chose it in the parable of the unforgiven debtor; and in the Lord’s Prayer He taught us to say, “Forgive us our

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debts as we forgive our debtors." So too the metaphor for a man's redemption is *apodosis*, the payment of a debt. A guilty man is a man who, being justly chargeable with some crime, has a penalty to pay, either to the laws of his country or to the eternal laws of God, or to both.

Since one object of my sermon will be to turn the eye of each one of us inly upon himself, let us observe that the world is full of guilt, and of that sense of guilt which is misery. The Gospel alone supplies an adequate remedy. No human soul, and therefore no religion, is without the sense of sin. In the songs of Greece, in the Vedas of Hindustan, in the Koran of the Mahometans, in the Tripitaka of the Buddhists, it is found as distinctly as in the Old and New Testaments. It

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is the feeling of guilt which extorts from the Mussalman his Ramadan; which makes the devotee fling himself under the Car of Juggernaut; which drives the Dervish, and the Fakir, and the Yogi, no less than it drove the Christian flagellants and Stylites and ascetics, to fierce self-torture. A sense of guilt rings through the numberless and anguished *misereres* of the world. Everywhere, in every age, mankind has felt it as a present disquietude and a fearful anticipation; as a terrible prospect and a gloomy retrospect; as a heavy burden and an impending scourge; as an agonizing presence without, and an avenging power behind. Men have known, even when they have not confessed, that God is always on the side of righteousness, and that therefore, if they be deliberately unright-

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eous, they have against them not only Holiness, but Omnipotence.

Now there are many different degrees of guilt, and many different classes of guilty men. First, and perhaps most numerous, are the unhappy *weaklings*. Self-defeated by their own passions, they live two lives in one. They are swayed by opposite impulses, of which the one feebly longs for God and the other hopelessly yields to evil. They are torn to pieces by the conflict of a divided being, hating what they do and yet doing it; loathing what they are and yet being it; seeing and approving that which is better and selling themselves to that which is worse. Then there are those whom the Italians call *infanti perduti*—lost souls madly misled by passion and the susceptibilities of genius. With them the beginning of

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sin has been as the letting out of water, till its fierce stream has swept away every barrier of reason and religion. Then there are the *backsliders* who, having been once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly calling, have done despite unto the Spirit of Grace, and counted the blood of their redemption a common thing. They are the class of which Judas in the pages of the Gospel, and Francis of Spires in the days of the Reformation, stand as the frightful representatives. Last, and perhaps worst of all, are the *reprobates* who are "past feeling;" who have sold themselves to do evil; who "work all uncleanness with greediness;" who not only do evil things, but tempt others also to do them, and "have pleasure in them that do them." Such was the cruel and depraved William Rufus in

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our own history, of whom a historian says that he always went to bed a worse man than he had risen in the morning, and he always got up a worse man than he had been the day before. And such in the Middle Ages was Cesare Borgia, the voluptuous, murderous child of the Renaissance, and others full of all mischief and all guile, the children of the devil who have crucified to themselves the Son of God and put Him to an open shame.

None of these transgressors can drown, either in blood or in self-indulgence, their sense of guilt. Everyone of them bears about——

“ A silent court of justice in himself—
Himself the judge and jury, and himself
The prisoner at the bar ever condemned ;
And that drags down his life.”

For every human being has a con-

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science, and sin does not end where it begins. If the warning conscience has been disregarded, the gnawing conscience is its avenger. "Who can express," says an old English divine, "that man's horror at times? All the furies of hell leap upon his heart as upon a stage. Thought calleth to Fear, Fear whistleth to Horror, Horror beckoneth to Despair, and saith, Come and help me to torment this sinner! One saith that she cometh from this sin, and the other that she cometh from that sin. So he goes through a thousand deaths and cannot die. Irons are laid upon his body like a prisoner; all his lights are put out at once." All this may go on in the interior of a man's soul unknown to anyone but himself, but sometimes the horror grows too great to be concealed. The soul of the guilty man

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becomes like the aspen, which shivers when there seems to be no breeze in the air. He is a haunted man. There are footsteps behind him. The sound of a shaken leaf terrifies him. The earth becomes to him as though it were made of glass, and the heavens seem to stare down upon him with a pitiless eye in every star. Over and over again have guilty men betrayed themselves where no fear was. Plutarch, the old heathen moralist, tells the story of a Greek named Bessus, who had murdered his father, and whom no one had suspected; but one day he was seen fiercely tearing out of a hedge a nest of young birds and trampling upon them; and when one asked why he was so cruel, he passionately answered, "Why then did the birds keep twittering at me, 'Parricide, parricide?'"

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When Professor Webster, the American murderer, was in prison, he indignantly complained that his fellow-prisoners kept shouting through the holes of the cells, "You are a bloody man." No such words had been spoken. The accusing voices which rang through his dungeon were but the echoes of his own guilty conscience. Yes! when a man flings himself against the adamantine laws of God, is it wonderful that at last he is dashed to pieces? When the guilty priest Pashur smote Jeremiah, and thrust him into the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, "Thy name shall be no more Pashur, but Magor-missabib shall be thy name." Magor-missabib! terror on every side, for thou shalt be a terror to thyself and to all thy friends.

But now it may be that some of you as you listen—perhaps with cynical in-

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difference, perhaps with reluctant weariness—may say “All this is only clerical talk, and these are mere professional bugbears. We men of the world know a great deal better; can it be denied that there are plenty of men at this moment in high places, wielding influence, bespattered with the laudation of parties, entertaining society and entertained by it, rich, popular, prosperous, of whom we know, and the world knows, that they are men whose lives have laughed Christian morality to scorn? They have lied; they have cheated; they have gambled; they have slandered; they have defrauded the hireling of his wages; they have flourished upon the sources of social demoralization; they have been seducers and adulterers and unclean; and they have seemed, after sinning with-

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out stint and without scruple, to be only the sleeker for it." Nay, more; may it not be, and must it not almost certainly be, that among this multitude who now hear me there may be some whose hearts are burning within them with guilty secrets, however much they may try to suffocate those smouldering fires? And perhaps such an one imagines, because of past impunity, that he in his person has cut off the curse which is the entail of sin. He says, "Tush! Thou God carest not for it. I shall never be removed. There shall no harm happen unto me." Well, Scripture recognizes the existence of such. David had well-nigh slipped when he saw the ungodly in such prosperity—lusty and strong, in no peril of death, coming into no misfortune like other folk, neither plagued like other men.

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But when he went into the sanctuary of God, then understood he *the end* of these men, namely, "Thou dost set them in slippery places, and castest them down and destroyest them." And Scripture also notices that sleep of drugged consciences. "Grey hairs are here and there upon him, and *he knoweth it not.*" "Ephraim is joined unto idols. Let him alone!" Why is this? It is because God has His times and His delays. Moral laws do not work so rapidly as material laws often do;—but they *do* work. The very Pagans knew it. Those are Pagan lines originally——

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they
grind exceeding small ;

Though with patience long He waiteth, yet ex-
actly grinds He all."

"The gods," they said, "move with

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leaden feet, but they smite with iron hands." And all the world's literature recognizes this truth, from old Pagan Homer, who sings of the sinner——

"Blind they rejoice, yet now, e'en now, they
fall ;
Death hastes amain : one hour o'erwhelms them
all "—

down to the Christian Cowper——

"There is a time—and justice marks the date—
For long forbearing clemency to wait.
That hour elapsed, the incurable revolt
Is punished, and down comes the thunderbolt."

If any of you in your youth and inexperience envy the wicked, do you think that they escape? Never! Sin is an adder which may be fondled in your bosom for a time, but it stingeth afterward. "With these thoughts in her mind," says a recent historian—thoughts, if he be right, of an adulteress and murderess—"Mary lay down

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to rest, perhaps to sleep. Remorse may disturb the slumbers of a man who is dabbling with his first experiences of crime; and when the sin is over, and nothing remains of the crime but the ruin which it has wrought, then, too, the Furies take their seats upon the midnight pillow. But the meridian of evil is for the most part left unvexed, and when a man has chosen his career he is left alone to follow it to the end." Yes, the sinner may sleep, but God does not forget. He is awakened, and often by a thunderclap. And how does God awaken men from their trance and dream of security? If any of you be guilty men or women—guilty and impenitent—how will God awaken you?

In various ways. I would ask you to mark them.

(i.) Sometimes by *irretrievable failure*

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in the one high wish or noble end of a man's wasted life. Take the case of the great Comte de Mirabeau. Genius he had, splendid eloquence, magnificent courage. He was, and he knew that he was, in the days of the French Revolution the one man who could have saved France. Had he lived, France might never have had to pass through the blood-bath of the Reign of Terror. But one thing was wanting to him, and that one thing was *character*. He was soiled with sensual shame, shattered alike in constitution and in influence by inordinate passions and moral excesses. Often he used to lament, with tears, over his own falls and follies; but the sins of his youth came flowing back upon him in their drowning muddy tide. The miseries which he alone could have held back burst from

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all sides upon unhappy France, and his life, ruined by uncleanness, was mainly a "*might* have been" and a "*might* have done." And you, young men, if you follow those wandering fires of evil passion which lead only into the fatal quagmire, your root, too, will be "as rottenness," and your blossom will "go up as dust." Later on, when haply you shall desire to accomplish some worthy end, that your life may not be wholly in vain, it may be that these very words of warning will come back across your mind like a driving gloom, and your fate shall be as that of the young knight seeking the Holy Grail to whom as everything slipped into ashes before him at a touch, then——

"Every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, 'This quest is not for thee.'"

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(ii.) And sometimes God's awakening punishment of guilt comes, not by irretrievable failure from without, but by *blighting misery* from within. Again take an instance. When Christ hung upon the cross Tiberius Cæsar was Emperor of Rome. Wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice; powerful even to the satiety of ambition; strong and beautiful till vice had made him leprous and decrepit; steeping himself in every pleasure each the very insanity of concupiscence; having utterly drowned the moral voice within—was Tiberius Cæsar happy? His contemporary historian tells us that he was by common consent the miserablest of men. He himself wrote to his own Senate in these words: "Fathers, may all the gods and goddesses destroy me more utterly than I feel that they are daily

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destroying me if I know what to do or whither to turn." Yes! if no outward punishment at all befall the guilty, they are still made their own executioners, and they put into their own souls the fury and the scourge.

(iii.) And, thirdly, God sometimes awakens guilt by *detection*. I have no time to dwell on its strange unexpectedness, on its inevitable certainty;—but, O guilty soul which hearest me and hast not repented, be sure thy sin will find thee out. Achan's theft lay buried in his tent, but Joshua brought Israel by tribes and the tribe of Judah was taken; and in Judah, house by house, the Zarhites were taken; and of the Zarhites, family by family, Zabdi was taken; and of Zabdi's family, man by man, Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the

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tribe of Judah, was taken ; and Joshua said unto Achan, "Tell me now what thou hast done?" Even so do God's lots leap out from the urn of judgment though man shakes them not. In our National Gallery you may see a very popular picture, of which one incident is a detective laying his hand on the shoulder of an escaped felon as he steps into a first-class carriage. The man's face is ghastly as ashes and distorted with terror. Critics said that it was exaggerated, that it was melodramatic. The painter himself told me that those who were familiar with such scenes had assured him that it was exactly true to the reality when, slow Justice having overtaken a man at last, he finds that her hand is iron and that her blow is death.

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“With light tread steals he on his evil way,
And light of tread does Vengeance steal on him.
Unseen, she stands already dark behind him;
But one step more: he shudders in her grasp.”

(iv.) And, fourthly, God sometimes awakens men from the intoxication of guilt by *natural retributive consequences*, all the brood of calamity fatally resembling their parent sin. The awakening may again long be delayed. To-day may be like yesterday, and to-morrow like to-day; yet one day will come for all sinners and then woe, woe, woe! and nothing but darkness. “Though God came not to Adam till evening, yet He came; and although the fire fell not on Sodom till the evening, yet it fell. And so comes the judge.” The man goes on his guilty path toward his guilty end, but at last, in a narrow way, where there is no turning, and there is a wall on either side, he meets the

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angel of the Lord standing face to face with him, and there is a drawn sword in that angel's hand.

(v.) And, sometimes, again, God awakens men from guilt—and I know not whether this be not the most terrible punishment of all—by simply *leaving them to themselves*, and leaving their sins to swell into their own natural developments. God lets a man eat of the fruit of his own way, and be filled with his own devices. The youth grows up into a man the very thought of whom he would once have repudiated with abhorrence. He grows up to do deeds which once would have filled him with loathing and contempt; and, then—in the horribly illuminating glare of some tremendous sin into which God has suffered him to fall; when the man awakens to find himself shamed and ruined,

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a felon and a criminal; when he hears the scream of the harpies and the flapping of their obscene wings as they swoop down upon his banquets; when the irrevocable deed is done, and an unnatural glare of conflagration is fiercely kindled in the midnight theatre of his soul; when all seems lost on earth; when Atè is upon him; when Vengeance leaps upon the stage; when the slowly-moving finger has crept to the fatal line upon the dial plate, and the hammer crashes out the hour, and the man feels that he has shivered into ruin the whole fabric of his mortal life——

“There cometh a mist and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again.”

Ah me!—God help thee then, for He only can! May He help all those poor souls lost in the dark!

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(vi.) And sometimes, lastly, God awakens men from sin by *death*. I believe that the vast majority of suicides have their origin in this remorse for guilt, or horror of its consequences. A poet, who knew what remorse of conscience was, compares the mind that broods over guilty woe to the scorpion, which, when it is placed in a circle of fire, darts its felonious sting into its own brain.

“So doth the darkened soul expire
Or leap like scorpion girt with fire.
So writhes the mind remorse has riven,
Unfit for earth, undoomed for heaven ;
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death.”

Is it not an awful thing when death lays his hand of a sudden on the shoulder of the unrepentant transgressor? “Ah, God, they have deceived me, then, and this is death?” said an Eng-

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lish king, whose life had not been holy, and he sank back dead into his attendant's arms. And beyond death? Well, let those who will talk glibly of that outer darkness for the guilty soul beyond. We know that God is love; we know that Christ died for all. We are told that in some far-off day, how we know not, God shall be "all in all." Millions of Christians at this day believe in a Purgatory where sin shall be cleansed by agony and repentance. Millions, perhaps more, believe that souls incurably evil are at last annihilated and destroyed. Others believe—and this is asserted to be especially orthodox doctrine—that in the spasm of death, unknown to men, God may reveal Himself to many guilty souls. I know not, nor profess to know, what God has not clearly revealed. But

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two things all may know—the one that sin unforsaken, unrepented of, is and remains sin unforgiven, and that until a soul has become holy and pure it cannot see God:—the other, that to live a life of sin is madness and misery. A great poet speaking of Guido, the vilest and deadliest criminal who has ever been painted by human imagination since Shakespeare drew us the picture of Iago, makes the good old Pope—who stands on his page as the incarnate representative of a magnificent justice—say respecting Guido, that just as the blackness of an all-obliterating midnight may be flashed by a blaze of lightning into an instant illumination, so when the axe falls on Guido's neck may the truth be flashed out by one blow, and Guido see one instant and be saved.

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‘ Else I avert my face, nor follow him
Into that dark obscure sequestered place
Where God unmakes but to remake the soul,
He else made first in vain—which must not
be ! ”

My friends, judge ye whether I have painted the fate of guilt to you in vernal colorings. Judge ye whether I have set for you to gay music this dance of death. But the secrets of God beyond the grave—those which He hath not revealed, I leave to God, believing only that there, as here, apart from God’s merciful forgiveness upon sin repented of, we shall each receive “the things done in the body”—those things not other things—“whether they be good or whether they be evil.”

To conclude :—if all of you who hear me are innocent, blameless, and harmless, “the children of God without rebuke,” you have not needed these warn-

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ings unless it be to stimulate you to do Christ's work, which He leaves us to carry on in this His guilty, His sick, His suffering world. But if you are guilty in any one of the various degrees of guilt;—if you be a youth trembling on the verge of guilt; if you be a man beginning to harden yourself in guilt; if you have already felt in your mouths the taste of those Dead Sea ashes from the forbidden fruit of guilt—oh, then, beware in time and stop in time! Do not awaken against you all this terrible, automatic, inevitable enginery of merciful wrath! If your soul is full of peril, if it be burning already with guilty secrets, get rid of them ere they destroy you. Get rid of them; confess them; atone for them; abandon the paths which lead to them. Cleanse your miserable hearts of their burden

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and their guilt. "Behold I open in the valley of Achor the door of hope." "Fly to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope!" Why need you die? For what other end except to save you from your guilt was your Saviour born? For what other end did He die upon the cross of shame? You have sinned, it may be deeply and grievously. Yea, but "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the Propitiation for our sins." "There is balm in Gilead. There is a physician there." There is a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness. Wash in that fountain and be clean, repenting of your sins; and then it shall be as true of you as of the guilty pagan converts of old, "Such (these things) were some of you; but ye were washed, but ye were

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sanctified, but ye were justified by the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.”

II

HINDRANCES TO REPENTANCE

Sermon preached in St. Margaret's Church

"I will declare mine iniquity ; I will be sorry for my sin." PSALM xxxviii. 18.

THERE can be no real repentance, and, therefore, no blessed forgiveness, unless we attain to two things: a knowledge of what sin is—how serious, how full of peril, how displeasing to God, how exceeding sinful; and a knowledge of what we ourselves are—a setting of ourselves before ourselves, a recognition in the full light of consciousness of our own lives and our own deeds. But a yet further step is necessary, which is, to weld together

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these two convictions, and to see that our own lives, our own deeds, our own thoughts make us sinners before God, without subterfuge, and without excuse. You might naturally suppose that this is no step in advance. You might think that the man who has a true view of sin, and who knows that he has committed sin, must, with shame and confusion of face, plead guilty before God at the bar of his own conscience, as he will have to do at the bar eternal. Yes, it might seem so ; but man is so strange a being, so given over to wilful self-delusion, so desperate in his moral aberrations, that it is not so. It is true of millions—may it not be true of us?—that while we hate sin in the abstract, while we confess in a vague, general way, as in the general confession, that “we have offended

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against God's holy laws," yet we do not really condemn ourselves? Remember how St. Paul turns upon the haughty, scrupulous, orthodox, self-satisfied Jew. "Behold thou art called a Jew, thou retest thyself upon the law, thou gloriest in God, thou canst discriminate the transcendent, thou art confident that thou art a light to them that sit in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes"—and then comes the crashing question, accompanied, as it were, with a home-thrust into the depth of the torpid conscience, "Thou, therefore, that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou rob temples? Thou

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that gloriest in the law, through thy transgression of the law dost thou dishonor God?" Did those to whom it was necessary for St. Paul to address those tremendous questions, did they regard their condemnation of sin as the condemnation of their own personal sinfulness? Did they know their own hearts? Do we ourselves?

I. How, then, is it that men do not connect together their intimate knowledge of themselves and their theoretical hatred of sin? Is it not worth while to try and get at the root of this delusion, and so to help self-examination, to trim the candle of the Lord, to tear off the mask which too many of us wear upon our hearts? There are various ways, and there are *many* ways, in which men try to hide themselves from themselves; to escape their own

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detection ; wilfully to evade their own nominal search.

(i.) One of these is *the sorcery of words*. Men call sins, which they see *others* commit, by their true names ; they call their own sins by false and glozing names. They look on the sins of others under the clear noonday of judgment : their own sins appear to them only in the twilight and the mirage, melted in outline, distorted in appearance, altered out of all recognition, by the myriad reflections and refractions of a deceptive medium. They invest their own vices with a verbal magic and fascination. What is pride in others, is in themselves, *proper spirit* ; what is slander in others, is in themselves, *moral indignation* ; what is cheating in others, is in themselves, *legitimate profit* ; what is in others an immoral

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acquiescence, is in themselves, a *practical common sense*; what is in others license, is in themselves, *Christian liberty*. We have been looking, evening after evening, at the sunset skies, aglow with amber, flushed with crimson—a gorgeous spectacle!—and men of science tell us that what we see is but the sunlight intercepted by suffused vapors, and clouds of volcanic dust, the shipwreck wrought by fierce forces of flame and earthquake thousands of miles away. Alas! is it not even so that we see our own vileness through an atmosphere surcharged with fragments of ruin, and we regard *that* as seeming loveliness which we should rather look on as the mirage of a ruined self-will?

(ii.) Then again, men will hardly ever look at their own actual deeds in connection with their own true *motives*.

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They live two lives. One is their common, habitual round of conduct, which is often base, and mean, and unworthy. The other is their traditional and imaginative homage to righteousness, which is upright and respectable. That shadowy, imaginative life they choose to take for their true life. In one aspect of themselves they know that they are drunkards, in the other they wear the blue ribbon of temperance. Unclean, they persuade themselves that they are immaculate. Malignant, they mistake for a reality their *mental picture* of candor. They have secretly made a league with death, and a covenant with hell; but they forswear even to themselves their own handwriting and their own seal. They have sold themselves to an evil spirit; but in public they disown, and in private they ignore

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him. Their lives are a stately temple front: its frieze is sculptured with heroic imagery; its entablature, like that of our Royal Exchange, is enriched with a pious inscription. Alas! alas! Enter beyond the vestibule, and in some inmost shrine, noiseless and far away, approached, it may be, only by secret stairs and half-hidden entrances—there, in little, mean, dark closets, so completely behind their ostensible lives and their expressed opinions, that they almost succeed in hiding it from themselves as they sit shrouded, and almost incognito each man even to himself—there, in those dark, backward, hidden, secret, inmost chambers, all the bad, the impure, the dishonorable work of their lives is done.

(iii.) But besides these two half-unconscious forms of hypocrisy—the

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calling of their own offences by pet names which vainly strive to rob vice of its evil by putting a veneer on its grossness; and the deliberate attempt to *hide* from the soul its own deeds of sin and shame—there are *two other ways*, on which I must dwell a little longer, by which men shirk the agonizing necessity of connecting themselves personally with the guilt of their own sins. The one is by freely condemning every other sin but the one to which they are themselves addicted. The lines have become proverbial—and proverbs almost always have a basis either of truth or of experience—in which the satirist tells us how men

“Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to.”

Take some instances. A man may be a libertine in heart and life; he may

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have betrayed those who trusted him; he may have destroyed feeble souls by means of their best affections; he may have undermined the moral sense of those whom his strength ought to have supported; he may have lent the contribution of his own unbridled passions to the most deplorable phases of the world's degradation:—and yet, corrupt as he is or has been, he walks with head erect, and is very proud of himself, because he is such “a man of honor.” Or, like not a few historic characters, he may be as cruel, and as treacherous, and as unclean almost as an evil spirit from the abyss; and yet he talks the most pious language, and almost thinks himself a servant of God, because he has such a hatred of the truths which he takes for heresy. Or, it may be, he is earning his living as a

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professional liar, and living in an envenomed atmosphere of gossip; and yet he may regularly go to church, and take himself for a Christian, because perhaps he feels a contempt for avarice! Or, once more, he may be earning his very bread by means dishonest and immoral; by trades which ruin men, body and soul; by houses in which the poor are huddled together, each sex like swine; by utter absorption in the most selfish Mammon-worship;—and yet he may speak of sensuality with the fiercest denunciations! To all of such may we not say——

Thou to wax fierce in the cause of the Lord,
To threat or to pierce with the heavenly sword,
With the anger and zeal, and the joy of the brave;
Who bade thee to fight—sin's slave?
Thou warnest and smitest—yet Christ must atone
For the soul which thou slightest—thine own.

It is thus a matter of primary impor-

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tance—for self-knowledge and self-condemnation alone can lead us helpless to the feet of mercy—to see that there are no personal sins for which we make an exception, no commandments which, for ourselves only, we strike out of the Decalogue; no favorite idols hidden in inaccessible corners of the solitary heart, which we adore with unhallowed incense, and garland with forbidden wreaths. Scripture in this, as in all other cases, will help to make much clear to us. It shows us that the essential nature of all sin is one and the same in principle, and that is the principle of self-will and disobedience. St. James teaches us that he who keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all. He warns us that the Ten Commandments are in reality but *one* commandment, and that

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He who said : “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” said also : “Thou shalt not kill :” so that if we commit no adultery, yet, if we steal, or lie, or kill, we are transgressors of the law.

Ah, let us look to it, my brethren, that there are no sins in our own hearts and in our own lives for which we have a saving clause ! We must judge of the guiltiness of our sins by trying to view them as God views them. David, though he had sinned so grievously against man, could still say to God, “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight, that Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and clear when Thou are judged.”

II. But, besides thus making exceptions for besetting vices, there is another reason why men fail to bring

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home their own sins to themselves. It is because they find the sweet, soft pleadings of egotism and of self-love so irresistible, that anything seems to be at least excusable which results from yielding to such temptations. Religion appeals to the reason and to the spirit; it nerves and braces; it elevates and inspires; it puts iron into our resolutions; it infuses the soul with manliness, and the will with strength; it sacrifices the present to the distant and the future, and so advances us in the dignity of human beings. And, on the other hand, sins—the sins of the world, the flesh, and the devil—degrade us into the animal: they unnerve, they effeminate, they debase, they paralyze; they make us care only for the moment with its frivolous, passing pleasures; they bid us listen to the base pleadings

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of a "miserable, hungry, shivering self," which is, like a crawling serpent, ever rustling amid the dead leaves of our weakened purposes, and ever hissing in our own ears: "Only this once." "There is no harm in it." "Thou shalt not surely die." This is the explanation, and the only possible one, of the insane infatuation which so often marks either the whole lives or the sudden actions of many men. This is why—just as the winged insect glances in the sunshine from flower to flower, till, when the cold comes, it is unprovided, and starves and dies—so we spend our reckless youth too often in providing for ourselves a rueful age. We live in youth as though we were the favorites of a prodigal, to find in manhood that we are the pensioners of a miser. We grasp the immediate

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pleasure, not caring or not choosing to believe that at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder. This is why we break down, either habitually, or in a moment, and once for all; and these two forms of moral ruin are in reality one and the same. The great sins, the great crimes into which men suddenly fall, are but the crimson flower of the aloe which has long been nurtured in the veins of the growing plant; and the sudden crime, the awful moral breakdown, is nothing else but the epitome of long years in which we have gradually weakened within us the protective barriers and the eternal sanctions of the moral law. My friends, I think it is worth while thoroughly to understand how deadly a thing it is to listen to these morbid pleadings of egotism, and how often,

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in one moment, they may, as with some irresistible solvent, crumble away the defences of the law within us! It is well that we all, but it is especially needful that the younger members of this congregation, in whom we cannot but feel so deep an interest, should thoroughly understand this moral law. Perhaps I may the more infix it in your memory if I show you how it is set forth in a most memorable scene of that great dramatist, to whom—although he spent much of his own life not, alas! untainted amidst the coarse surroundings of a vicious society—it was yet given by God to read with deepest insight, and to express with unequalled power, the secrets of the human heart. The scene shows us in the concrete with what fatal ease and swiftness a weak soul

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wilfully blinds itself, when there is personal advantage in hiding the heinousness of guilt. A young voluptuary, a gay lover of pleasure, is in a prison cell, awaiting sentence of death. His life is offered him at the price of a shameful disloyalty. His sister enters the prison to tell her brother that he must prepare to die to-morrow morning. "Is there no remedy?" he says. "None," she replies, "none but such remedy as to save a head would cleave a heart in twain." "But is there none?" She answers——

"Yes, brother, you may live.

There is a devilish mercy in the judge,
If you'll implore it, that will free your life,
But fetter you till death."

She speaks of the remorse of a life which would follow him even if he had

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for freedom all the space in which the world rolls. He asks what the possible deliverance is; and she—knowing that sin is weakness, that sin is *always* weakness, in character, and in everything else—reading rightly his effeminate, corrupted character, answers——

“Ob, I do fear thee, Claudio, and I quake
Lest thou a feverous life shouldst entertain,
And six or seven winters more respect
Than a perpetual honor. Dar’st thou die?
The sense of death is most in apprehension,
And the poor beetle that we tread upon,
In corporal suff’rance feels a pang as great
As when a giant dies.”

But when he gives a brave answer to this, and asks why she should shame him by the suspicion that he would give way, encouraged by his bold answer, she tells him the course by which his life may be saved, and he, at first,

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bravely and indignantly and in horror refuses it. At the first blush of it the moral sense speaks out with a voice clear as the thunder-crash of Sinai; but almost instantly afterward, listening to those pleadings of egotism, of which I spoke, the miserable youth begins to tamper with the thought of base deliverance; to extenuate the guilty price; to dwell on the fearfulness of death; to prefer the hollowness of a shamed life; last of all, to plead to be saved from the axe's blow, even at the cost of that which at first his own moral sense had so burningly condemned!—and all this in a few moments of transition. And so, degraded by his weakness to the very uttermost, he calls down upon his head the burst and blaze of his sister's just abhorrence to such a “warped slip of wilderness.”

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“Oh, you beast!

Oh faithless coward! Oh dishonest wretch!
Die! perish! Might but my bending down
Reprieve thee from thy fate it should proceed.
I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,
No word to save thee!”

My friends, never, I think, in the world's literature has it been given to mortal man more forcibly to illustrate the ready access of guilt—even the worst guilt; into an already weakened soul—the *facilis descensus Averni* which is smoothed by the insidious pleadings of a corrupt heart.

III. What then, in conclusion, should be our protection against these specious thoughts of our own heart and our own counsel? My friends—you, above all, the younger souls in this congregation—God has not left you unshielded. He has assigned the soul of man to the special, immediate guardianship of two

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pure and strong holy spirits; and if, with uphill step and sunward gaze, man places his hand in the grasp of these two great angels, on the right hand and on the left, they will lead him, unstumbling, through a noble life to a death of fearless peace. The name of one of those great archangels of our being is Duty,—Duty, that angel so stern and yet so beautiful!—"sublime and mighty being, who, without charm or insinuation, without threat or terror, gainest always reverence, if not always obedience, and holdest up a law to which all inclinations bow, however strongly they may rebel!" And the name of the other great archangel is Conscience—Conscience, "that aboriginal vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas," with a

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voice now like the blast of a trumpet, now thrilling, and still, and small. Happy he, thrice beautiful and thrice blessed is his life, who from youth upward has, by the grace of God, committed himself to the care of these two great angels, and has felt it enough of safeguard to think what a curse it would be to him, if they were even for a moment to turn upon him their calm looks of intolerable condemnation! Such a man, such a youth is safe. No record that leaps to light could ever shame him. "More even than the gaze of others will he dread and blush at the reflection of his own severe eye upon himself, were it to see him thinking or doing what is base, were it even in the deepest secrecy." More often, alas! he puts his hand into the grasp of far other guides; of the awful tempters whose

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blessings are curses in disguise ; of vice, whose fair mask only covers a leprous face ; of pleasure, whose stolen waters are like the waters of Marah. He lulls the soul into a false security and happiness ; he launches on the swift, smooth rapids which sweep only to the horrible cataract ; and the voices of these two great angels are drowned, and they turn away, because these evil counsellors enlist on their side the soft, treacherous self which will not endure hardness, or fight the good fight of faith. Therefore, how much need have we all to pray the prayer of Augustine : “ O God, deliver me from a bad man, even from myself ” ; and that other prayer : “ O God, harden me against myself ”——

This coward with pathetic voice,
That craves for ease, and rest, and joy,
Myself, arch-traitor to myself,
My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog, whatever road I go.

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Yes ; and have we not daily need to recall that One there is who——

Can roll this strangling load off me,
Break off my yoke, and set me free ?

My friends, the subject is not ended, but my time is ended. Surely I have furnished you with some truths on which we all may think. This only will I add to-day, that, if we would receive the grace of Christ, we must come as true penitents ; if otherwise, we shall not be forgiven. We must not only see that sin is hateful ; we must not only confess, “ Thus and thus have I done ; ” but we must see that *we* individually, and *we* specifically are sinners, and that without excuse. It is only to the helpless who feel themselves to be helpless that Christ comes. To the blind who say, “ We see,” to the lepers, who, cov-

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ering up their faces, assert that, "We are clean," to the sinners who say, "We have no sin," and therefore their sin remaineth,—Christ comes not. If you would have one specimen from His own gospels of those to whom He *does* come, take that poor penitent woman who was a sinner, who at the banquet of the loveless Pharisee, bathed Christ's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. She was a true penitent, and to her much was forgiven because she loved much.

"She sat and wept beside His feet; the weight
Of sin oppressed her heart; for all the blame
And the poor malice of the worldly shame
For her were past, extinct, and out of date :
Only the sin remained, the leprous state.
She would be melted by the heat of love,
By fires far fiercer than are blown to prove
And purge the silver ore adulterate.

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“She sat and wept; and, with her untressed hair,
Still wiped the feet she was so blessed to touch;
And He wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.
Lord, we are sinners, full of doubts and fears,
But make us humble hearts of love and tears!”

III

ENTHUSIASM

“Fervent in spirit.”—ROM. xii. 12.

NEITHER can Foreign Missions ever be carried on worthily of our individual duties to God and our great national responsibilities and opportunities, nor can the moral and religious condition of our overcrowded home population ever be effectively ameliorated without a Divine and steady enthusiasm. If we allow the curse of greed, of sloth, of selfishness, of conventionality to blight us with its poisonous lichen, then our deepening neglect and our increasing degradation will wax worse and worse, until the pit shall swallow them. Dullness, deadness, ap-

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athy, selfishness, will never amend the smallest of the world's evils. Enthusiasm is indispensable; there is nothing which the devil dreads so much, there is nothing which the world denounces so continuously. To call a man an enthusiast has often been regarded as the sneer most likely to thwart his plans. Like the words "Utopian," "Quixotic," "impractical," it is one of the mudbanks reared by the world to oppose the swelling tide of moral convictions. The famous saying of Prince Talleyrand, "*Surtout, point de zèle*"—"Above all, no zeal"—concentrates the expression of the dislike felt by cold, calculating, selfish natures for those who are swept away by the force of mighty and ennobling aspirations. Throughout the eighteenth century—by way of protest first against the sobriety of the

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Puritans, and afterward against the waking up of deep religious emotions by Wesley and Whitfield—the sermons of all comfortable, full fed, wealthy conventionalists were filled with deprecations of enthusiasm. Men did not like the glow of reality, the blaze of deep feeling, the rushing winds of prophecy, harbingers of the dawn bursting over cold, grey lives. What they wished for was the calculating religion of compromise; of an orthodoxy which slumbers because it will not inquire; of a conventionality which never broke their league with death or their covenant with hell. They dreaded the throb of a startled conscience, the agony of a revealing light. They preferred to fulfil with infinite satisfaction their ideal of making the best of both worlds, amid an odor of sanctity which indulged in

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every form of selfish pleasure which life could give. They preferred to divide their allegiance between God and mammon, and to assign to mammon by far the heartiest share.

And this attitude of mind is the attitude of the majority in every age. In every age long tolerated abuses give themselves the airs of right; and long tolerated falsehoods give themselves the airs of truth; and blind authority keeps beating with its crutch the child that might have led him.

Now what is *enthusiasm*? It is a Greek word which means the fullness of Divine inspiration. It implies absorbing and passionate devotion for some good cause. It means the state of those whom St. Paul has described as τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες, “fervent”—literally, “boiling—in spirit.” It describes

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the soul of man no longer mean and earthy, but transfigured, uplifted, dilated by the Spirit of God. When a man is an enthusiast for good, he is so because a Spirit greater than his own has swept over him, as the breeze wanders over the dead strings of some Æolian harp, and sweeps the music which slumbers upon them now into divine murmurings, and now into stormy sobs. A man becomes an enthusiast when God has flashed into his conscience the conviction of right and truth; has made him magnetic to multitudes; has made him as a flame of fire which leaps out of dying embers; as a wind of God which breathes over the slain that they may live. Without enthusiasm of some noble kind a man is dead; without enthusiasts a nation perishes. Of each man it is true that

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in proportion to the fire of his enthusiasm is the grandeur of his life ; of each nation it is true that without enthusiasm it never has the will, much less the power, to undo the heavy burden or to atone for the intolerable wrong.

There are two forms which this Divine enthusiasm has assumed in religious souls—the *enthusiasm for humanity*, and the *enthusiasm for individual salvation*.

I. The latter, which is the narrower and more selfish, which indeed is often selfishness expanded to infinitude, has led to many errors. Men, ready to sacrifice everything to secure their own personal deliverance from what they had dreamed of hell, have lived like the hermits in deserts or on mountains, or have shut themselves up in monastic cells, or have subjected their bodies to

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cruel torments. The beliefs that have led to such lives are natural to men. They are found in every age and in every country and in all religions; and deeply as they are intermingled with error, yet so sovereign are the virtues of self-denial, that without doubt they shall have their reward.

II. And sometimes, on the other hand, the enthusiasm for humanity has been dissevered from deep personal religion. In those cases, with like charity, we may be sure that God will still bless the sincere lovers of their brethren, and that Christ will never be hard on any man who has died for men.

III. But when the two have been combined, when the sense of devotion has been united with the exaltation of charity, then such men have ever been the most glorious and the most blessed

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of the benefactors of mankind. What was Christianity itself but such an enthusiasm learned from the example, caught from the Spirit of Christ its Lord! The same love, even for the guilty and wretched, which brought the Lord Jesus step by step from that celestial glory to the lowest depth of the infinite descent, has been kindled by His Spirit in the heart of His noblest sons. Forgiven, they have longed that others should share the same forgiveness. As some poor soldier whom the General he looks to and leans upon as God has rated for some backwardness, and bidden charge one against a thousand, "hurls his soiled life against the pikes and dies," so the best men have been ready to do all and to bear all for the sake of Him who died for them. What else was it but this burning en-

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thusiasm which drove Paul, who calls himself less than the least of the Apostles, and not worthy to be called an Apostle, to work more abundantly than they all? What else but this enthusiasm wrung from him the cry—which has shocked the vulgar selfishness of so many commonplace Christians—"I could wish myself accursed from Christ for the sake of my brethren"?

Again and again this Divine fire has died away from the world; again and again it has been rekindled by God's chosen sons. What would the world have been without them? Ask what the world would have been without the sun. Without the sunshine the world would have relapsed into a chilly and icy waste! Without the intense fire of God burning in enthusiastic hearts, the moral, the spiritual world, yes, the

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whole world of man, would sink into a universe of death!

1. Think what enthusiasm has done even in spheres not immediately religious. The *enthusiasm* of the student, of the artist, of the discoverer, of the man of science—what else could have inspired their infinite patience, their unlimited self-sacrifice? Men cannot without effort render great services to mankind. Extreme lovers of their country usually have to suffer in proportion to their faithfulness. “The progress of mankind,” it has been truly said, “has been from scaffold to scaffold and from stake to stake;” but men animated by a fine enthusiasm have braved the penalty. It plunged Roger Bacon into torture and imprisonment. It made Columbus face the sickly cruelty of ignorant priesthoods

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and the stormy hurricanes of unknown seas. It caused years of poverty, of suffering, of persecution, of calumnious denunciation to Galileo, to Kepler, to Newton, to the early geologists, to Charles Darwin. They gave to mankind a toil intense and infinite. And if in these days man has been enabled to

“put forth
His pomp, his power, his skill,
And arts that makes fire, flood, and air,
The vassals of his will,”

it is only because *his more gifted brethren have toiled for his good*. And what supported them? An inspired enthusiasm, a fervency of spirit which prefers labor to ease, love to selfishness, truth to falsehood, and God to gold.

2. Again, there is the enthusiasm of the *Reformer*. Think how low the nations might have sunk if their deca-

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dence had not been again and again arrested, and their criminalities again and again rebuked! Think what Italy was fast becoming when Savonarola—until they choked his voice in blood—thundered in the Duomo of Florence against her corruptions and her apostasy! Think how the cramp of an intolerable tyranny might still have been torturing the souls of men had not Wycliffe braved death to give the Bible to the English people! Think what truths would have been drowned once more in the deep seas of oblivion, if John Huss had not calmly gone to the stake to which he was condemned by the bishops who surrounded the perjured Sigismund! Imagine what a sink of loathly abominations the nominal Church of God might now have been, if the voice of Luther had never

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shaken the world! Consider how the Church of England might even now be settling on her lees, if, in an age when corrupt Churchmen were sating their greed with her revenues, Whitefield had not drawn men back to the simplicity which is in Jesus Christ! Churches and nations need many resurrections, and churches and nations were freezing into apathy and stagnating into pestilence, when, in the person of these enthusiasts, God once more made the winds His angels and the flaming fires His messengers, and through them poured forth a new Pentecost upon mankind.

3. Again, there is the enthusiasm of the *missionary*. In the first centuries the world was full of missionaries. In those days every Christian felt that he was not a Christian if he were not in

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some form or other God's missionary. And for centuries the Church produced many a noble missionary; men like Ulfilas, men like Boniface, men like Columba. Then began the ages of neglect, and darkness, and superstition, and for whole centuries there was only found here and there a man like St. Louis of France, or St. Francis of Assisi, with a mission spirit strong within him. In modern days it is to Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians, to William Carey and the Baptists, that we owe the revival of missionary zeal. In the last century missions were regarded as foolish, rash—I know not what; for the devil has a large vocabulary of words to quench the spirit which is so dangerous to his domain. Yet men despised and defied the devil, and the world which is his minion. Think

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of John Eliot, the lion-hearted apostle of the Indians and his motto, that "Prayer and painstaking can accomplish anything;" think of the young and sickly David Brainerd, going alone into the silent forests of America, and among their yet wilder denizens with the words, "Not from necessity but from choice, for it seemed to me God's dealings toward me had fitted me for a life of solitariness and hardness." Think of Adoniram Judson and the tortures he bore so cheerfully in his Burmese prison !

And we, too, in these days have seen bishops like apostles. We have seen Charles Mackenzie leave the comforts of a Cambridge tutorship to die among the pestilent swamps of the Zambezi; we have seen in imagination the body of the young martyr, Coleridge Patti-

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son, floating with its palm branch of victory over the blue sea among the coral isles. Nor do I know any sign more helpful for this nation, among so many that are dark, than this—that our public schools are founding mission houses in the neglected wastes of London; and that our young undergraduates, and some young noblemen also, are working in Whitechapel and Bethnal Green; and our young athletes are going out to labor as poor men in China and Hindustan. What is it that alone can sustain them? The enthusiasm, the fervency of spirit which the Spirit of Christ their Lord alone inspires; the self-sacrifice which scorns luxury and pours silent contempt on gold.

4. Then, once more, think of the glowing and beautiful enthusiasm of our *social philanthropists*. What man

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has done more for a multitude of souls than John Pound, the poor Plymouth cobbler, who, in the simple enthusiasm of ignorant love for the poor ragged children of the streets, became the ultimate founder of Ragged Schools! What a light from heaven was shed upon countless wanderers by the Gloucestershire printer, Robert Raikes, who saw the children wasting their Sundays idly in the streets. Go to the Embankment and see his statue there, and read the inscription: "As I asked, 'Can nothing be done?' a voice answered 'Try'; I did try, and lo! what God hath wrought." Who can judge the amount of misery rolled off the despairing heart of the world by the reformers of prisons, John Howard and Elizabeth Fry—Elizabeth Fry entering the foul wards for women in Newgate

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Prison, protected only by the beauty of her holiness; and John Howard traversing Europe, as the great Edmund Burke said, "to dive into the depths of dungeons, to plunge into the infections of hospitals, to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt." Most of us are drowsing and slumbering in immoral acquiescence; the cry of the miserable rings in our ears, and we heed it not; the wayfarer welters in his blood by the wayside, wounded and half dead, and after one cold glance we carefully pass by on the other side. It was not so with these. They did not ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" They did not talk, they acted; they did not sigh, but lit their lamps and girded their loins. [They were not content to spend their lives in the stupid indifference of

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vulgar comfort, or the dull apathy of intolerant fatalism. } Most men do not really care for the wretchedness of others; they shrug their shoulders, and say it cannot be helped. It was not so with these. They were like the noble lady in the fine old legend, who, going to her rough-hearted lord to plead with him for the people, told him of their tears, and told him that if they paid his taxes they would starve.

“Whereat he stared, replying half amazed,
‘You could not let your little finger ache
For such as these!’—‘But I would die!’ she
said.”

5. In this Abbey, so rich in records of nobleness, we are surrounded by memorials of enthusiasts, and there is not a grave among them all which deserves greener wreaths than theirs. Very few of those who are here buried

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were sluggish comfort mongers, or vulgar place hunters, or selfish millionaires. There was one great curse which, in spite of Christianity, went lingering on from century to century. [It is astonishing, it is even terrible, to note how content men grow with the existence of familiar and long-continued evils ; how consciences dulled and blunted by custom cease to regard injustice as injustice, or crime as crime ; how they suffer accepted wrongs even to walk abroad in the guise of abstract right !]

So it was that—in defiance of every principle of true Christianity—slavery was tolerated. Men defended the system by the texts of which Satan always keeps a choice store in hand to quote for his own purposes. Many seem to fancy that a scrap of scripture can give them secure warrant for any traversing

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of God's eternal moral laws. Luxuries were supplied by slave labor; our West Indian islands were tilled by human slaves sold in the open market by the stealers of men. And if anyone protested against this gross iniquity, he was called an atheist, and was refuted by such as those which are now constantly quoted against temperance reformers;—as though the slave-master and the drink-seller were the chief supporters of British and Biblical morality. Then God fired with Divine enthusiasm the mind of one man. It often happens that a man with no exceptional powers—a man in no other sense remarkable—yet has the moral genius of unclouded insight into right and wrong. Such a man was young Thomas Clarkson. If 31,000,000 of his countrymen were content to acquiesce in a crime,

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was that any reason why he should do so? He dedicated himself as a youth to undo this mighty wrong, and for twenty years he struggled on, and for twenty years he braved hatred, slander, and abuse from those who maintained that they had vested interests in the curse and ruin of their fellow-men. For years the newspaper paragraphs lied about him, and venal writers got their penny a line for abusing him—or perhaps twopence if the line was peculiarly venomous and peculiarly virulent. But at the end of those years, in spite of this, he succeeded. He gave new life to England's greatness, by striking a deathblow at England's crime, and preventing her, as is said on yonder monument, "from using the arm of freedom to rivet the fetters of the slave." On the great Western conti-

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nent the same deliverance was accomplished mainly by one more enthusiast, William Lloyd Garrison, who as a mere youth came to the conviction that slavery was a crime. With nothing to aid him but a small printing press and one negro lad, he stood up daily, in peril of assassinations, to tell 20,000,000 people that they were wrong. In a very few years he had turned their apathy into fury and their icebergs into flame; and after braving for forty years imprisonment and execration and threats of murder, the hand which had first been raised for the eternal principle of liberty was enabled to write the very statute which made it law; and not all who worked with him were so free as he was from wrong methods to bring about the right.

6. It is a peril, it is a temptation to

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enthusiasts that they are often stung by pity into a rage which leads them to use rash words and to adopt indefensible methods. Among such men was John Brown, of Ossawatimie, who was hung at Harper's Ferry. He had indeed used violent means to encompass hallowed ends, but for all that he will, even from his gibbet, take his place among brave souls who, believing that God is God, trample wicked laws under their feet. You know the touching incident of his execution :

“ John Brown of Ossawatimie spake on his dying day,

‘ I will not have to shrive my soul a priest in slavery's pay.

But let some poor slave mother whom I have striven to free,

With her children, from the gallow stairs put up a prayer for me.’

John Brown of Ossawatimie, they led him out to die,

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And lo! a poor slave mother with her little child
pressed by.

Then the bold blue eye grew tender, and the old
harsh face grew mild,

As he stooped between the jeering ranks and
kissed the negro's child.

The shadows of his stormy life that moment fell
apart,

And they who blamed the bloody hand forgave
the loving heart,

That kiss from all the guilty means redeemed
the good intent,

And round the grisly fighter's hair the martyr's
aureole bent."

He was not the only man to whom
the errors of life have been condoned
because of the high enthusiasm which
gave glory to all its virtues.

7. I may say summarily that I do not
know of one great moral or religious
work which has ever been achieved in
this world without this Divine enthu-
siasm. Without enthusiasm Christen-
dom would have sunk long ago into a
fen of stagnant waters, into a waste of

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icy death. These enthusiasts, these healers of wrong, these smiters of the oppressor, these deliverers of the oppressed, these teachers of the ignorant, these binders up of the broken-hearted, these preachers of the Gospel to the poor, are they to whom, far more than to kings, or to statesmen, or conquerors, or ecclesiastics, our statues should be erected. They are the true saviors of the nation, the true deliverers of the world. An age falls into fatal lethargy when it has no sons like these. It is the fire in the heart of the volcano that clothes its slopes with gardens and vineyards. Let the fire die out of its heart, and its very crater may be choked with snow. It is the movement in the stream that saves it from corruption ; let no spring feed and no wind ruffle it, and it will be soon choked

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with rotting filth. Such are the hearts of nations that have sunk into idle luxury; such is the state of nations who have no ear to hear, and no heart to pity, and no arm to strike; such would be the state of all the world if all men were what all but a handful have been.

8. My friends, do not think that the work is done; that we need this Divine enthusiasm no more. The torch must ever be handed on by the eager runners across the dust and darkness of the intervening generations. There are questions even more pressing, more vital now, than the slave trade was in the days of our fathers—and questions which affect a far vaster multitude. Shame on us if we forget the example of their courage and their faithfulness! Those questions become year by year

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more important in our crowded cities, and the sluggish conscience of the nation is not yet adequately roused to grapple with them. Two there are in particular, which we must either conquer or be ruined by them—two master fiends which require every energy among us to smite their towering crest with all our power: one is the fiend of drink, which, as the Prime Minister told the assembled Parliament of England, causes to us a curse more deadly than war, famine, and pestilence combined;—and the other is impurity. It will be a crying shame to England after the ghastly and terrible revelations which have of late been thrust upon us, and which she can no longer pretend coolly to ignore, if we allow our streets to reek unchecked with human sacrifices, loathlier and more lingering and more in

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number than the human sacrifices of those who passed their children of old through the fire to Moloch, the abomination of the children of Amnon. Every curse—the bitter outcry of outcast London, the moans of squalid Liverpool, the selfishness of luxury, the sullenness of want, the prevalence of godlessness, the straying of the masses from Christian ministrations—every curse springs from these two master curses; like Aaron's rod, they swallow up all others. Are we to be such cowards as still, from generation to generation, to leave these arrows to rankle and gangrene in England's heart? If the Parliament of England will not deal with them—and that effectually, and that without fear of man, and that without base tamperings with the unclean thing, and that speedily, and that finally—then the peo-

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ple of England, if the people of England have a spark of manliness or sincerity in them, must deal with them. They must *make* Parliaments hear their voice; they must frame the public opinion which goes before the very chariot of God:—and if the Church of England will not deal with them, the whole Church of God must deal with them. I believe that the Church of England is roused in almost every direction to a sense of her sacred duty. If not, woe to her! If she is to be bribed by monopolists, if she is to cower before organizations, if she is to be frightened by millionaires, if she is to be cajoled by flatterers, if she is to be perverted by self-satisfaction, if she is to be blinded by stupid sophisms, if she be dull and ignorant enough to be deceived by the devil when he blesses and approves his

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objects with a text, she will perish, and perish deservedly, and in due time perish unpitied.

May God rouse up among her young men some enthusiasts! May He give her sons, true and strong. Her work is our work, is your work, the work of every true man, woman, and youth; and woe unto us, woe unto the Church, woe unto England, if our ears remain forever deaf to the call! [Woe unto us, woe unto you, if, stultified by compromise, if seduced by pleasure, if choked by greed, we eat and drink and pick and steal and lie and slander after the way of the world, too guilty and too selfish to strike one blow for the cause of Christ!]

IV

EGOISM AND ALTRUISM: A CONTRAST

“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”—JAMES i. 22.

THERE are two great classes of human lives; there are two fundamental differences which separate them. The one class is *egoistic*, it lives simply for itself; the other, if you will pardon me the word, is *altruistic*, it lives mainly for the good of others. The one is epicurean; the other is Christlike. The one, sooner or later, goes and works in God's vineyard; the other does not profess to work, or does so only in pretence. The rule of the Christian is Labor for God, labor for your fellow-men—“No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth

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unto himself; even Christ pleased not Himself":—and therefore the life of the Christian is beneficent and useful. The rule of the selfish man, of the egoist, of the worldling, is "Get, spend, eat, drink, enjoy thyself; the rest is nothing."

We all notice the odiousness and the despicableness of the selfish life when we see the spectacle of it in others; but the very essence of selfishness is not to see itself in its own repulsive colors. Holding before itself the tiny speck of its own worthless personality, it shuts out with that nothingness the universe and the sun. It constructs itself a chamber like a very famous one in the foreign castle, which is everywhere surrounded by mirrors, so that when a man stands in the midst of it, he sees nothing but, infinitely multiplied, reproductions

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of himself. Self-assertion, self-worship, self-pleasing, self-indulgence, these embrace every form of sin. They shift the centre of gravity from God's infinitude to man's insignificance; they turn the thoughts of man wholly upon his own narrow heart and his own corrupt desires. Sometimes this corrupt egoism has its stronghold in the passions of the flesh. They turn the life of the immortal being into the sensuousness of a comfort which has no sympathy with others, or into a slough of uncleanness, in which men like natural brute beasts, made only to be taken and destroyed, perish utterly in their own corruption. Sometimes it absorbs the desires of the mind:—and then men become worshippers of money, of rank, of power, heady, high-minded, implacable, arrogant, without natural affection,

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without God in the world. The former class—those swayed by the desires of the flesh—are they who indulge their own basest passions, who break up ruthlessly the blessed peace of home; they who make their members the instruments of Satan, and reap in their bodies the corruption they have sown; they who pluck the rose from the fair forehead of an innocent shame and plant a blister there; they who leave everything in this world marked as far as they can with the deplorable trace of their own uncontrolled impulses. To the latter class, those who are absorbed by the desires of the mind, belong the ruinous conquerors who from time to time have swept over the earth with sword and flame, and have made her furrows red with the blood of men.

“The course you propose,” said

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Prince Metternich to Napoleon, "would cost the lives of a hundred thousand men."

"A hundred thousand men!" answered Napoleon. "What are a hundred thousand men to me?"

Prince Metternich walked to the window, flung it wide open, and said, "Sire, let all the world know that you express this atrocious sentiment!"

There you have this egoism on a colossal scale. Yet a man need not be a Napoleon to sacrifice the good of hundreds, to sell the fate of his country for the satisfaction of himself, his party, or his class. But the sensual are more numerous than the recklessly ambitious, because fallen human nature seems to ally itself less easily with the devils than with the animals. In our eager mammon worship how many there are

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who worship their counting house and burn incense to their ledgers; who show by their lives their conviction that, after all, man's life *does* consist in the multitude of things he possesses, and that if a man can get what the world, the flesh, and the devil can give him, he may leave the soul to take care of itself! How many there are with no higher aim than that of the "man about town,"—bettors, gamblers, idlers, flutterers about the passionless, pleasureless dissipations of society; hangers-on of club life; men with nothing to do, nothing worth doing, nothing but their own bad passions to care for; men who have erased "ought" and "ought not" from their vocabulary; who care only to live in such a way that the world may give them the fullest satisfaction it can. But of that class I

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know nothing. I can only quote from a verbal picture drawn by a man who did. He was a keen observer, a writer of fiction, and he says : “Colonel Mar-
rable was a man who, through his long, useless, ill-flavored life, always contrived to live well ; to eat and drink of the best ; to lie softly ; to go about in the most faultless clothes made by the most fashionable tailors ; to indulge every passion though the cost of it might be to others ruin for life ; to know no gods but his own bodily senses and no duty but that which he owed to those gods ; to eat all and produce nothing ; to love no one but himself ; to have learned nothing but how to sit at table like a gentleman ; to have no creed, no friend, no conscience, no patriotism ; to be troubled with nothing that touched his heart :—Such was he. Men gave him

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dinners, and women smiled upon him, and tradesmen supplied him though he did not pay his bills; he never lacked cigars and champagne, and, on the whole—for the world loves its own—on the whole, he was popular.” This is a sketch—repeated in many forms—of conceited, idle, worthless, self-indulgent men of the richer class. And the class of women corresponding to them are even more numerous; those to whom in ancient days the Hebrew prophets said, “Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my words, ye careless daughters!” In the humbler class these egotists have their representatives in the hulking groups which hang about the doors of public houses and live upon the toils of their miserable wives; in the dissipated youths whose recreation is the music hall, whose

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oracle is the sporting newspaper, whose literature is the garbage of corruption. The self-indulgent, self-absorbed life ranges up and down many degrees in the social and moral scales. It may be that of the elegant and bejewelled patrician, or it may reek of the gin shop and the prison. It may assume the guise of languid ease or that of brutal ruffianism ; but in all cases it is only selfishness wearing different masks, and in all phases it involves the most despicable form to which human life can sink. And God—speaking in the force of outward circumstances—God, “ Whose light shines on so patiently, showing all things in the slow history of their ripening ”—stamps this life with the seal of His utter reprobation. Oh, how terrible and certain a retribution does this life of selfishness draw

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down upon itself! Apart from all question of future punishment, how does it draw down upon itself the Nemesis of untamable desires, insatiable passions, inevitable fears, even when no open shame or headlong ruin follows it! How terrible is the despair and the satiety when self demands more, and wildly craves for more than life can give or the exhausted powers can supply; when the heart of the man has become dry as dust; when the honey has turned into gall and wormwood; when the soul, once capable of better things, is chained to the decaying corpse of the body which is full of the sins of its youth; when the miserable idols hold out in vain their palsied hands to the miserable worshippers; when the fish that has run so greedily to the gilded bait is flung with sore

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thirst to gasp and die among the shallows; when the very root of life has become as bitterness, and its blossom has gone up as dust. Does not the poet of "The Ancient Mariner" describe that life of sensual egoism——

"Her lips were red, her locks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold,
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
A nightmare life in death was she,
Who fixed men's blood with cold."

How different from all this, and how beautiful, is the altruistic life, the unselfish life, the life which is given to God and fearlessly lives for the good of its fellow-men—the life, not like those others, earthly, sensual, devilish; but pure, gentle, peaceful, full of mercy and good fruit, without partiality and without hypocrisy. That is the life of heaven; such are the lives of the saints of God. The world has ever recog-

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nized the lustre, the loveliness of such a life, though in envy and hatred it has many times slain or slaughtered those who have tried to live it. Rise before us as ye were, ye saints of God, in the beauty of your holiness; show us the lives "roses without, lilies within;" the lives white as lilies in their transparent guilelessness, and red as roses in their glowing enthusiasm!

"Wake again, beloved Teutonic ages!

Speak again, beloved primæval creeds!

Flash, ancestral spirit, from your pages!

Wake a greedy age to nobler deeds."

Show how gracious a thing a human being may become, in whom the love of God, expanded into infinitude, has led to the abjuration of the lower self. Can such a life be described in a single word? Yes! and it lies at the centre of all that in all nations of the world

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has the best right to call itself religion. When Confucius was asked by a disciple to express all the virtues in one word, he answered, "Is not *Reciprocity* such a word?" and by "Reciprocity" he meant the Divine rule—"Do unto thy neighbor as thou wouldst that he should do to thee." When Auguste Comte tried to formulate a new religion of Positivism he made its one rule *Altruism*—"Vivre pour autrui." It is Christianity that gives us a word more divine, more all-comprehensive, more steeped in emotion, more radiant with the light of heaven than "reciprocity" or "altruism;"—and that is the word *love*. And—let men prate how they will about other things—if the Word of God stands sure, then one truth is supremely important above all other truths, and that is, that we "owe no

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man anything, but to love one another ;” that love is “the bond of perfectness ;” and that “love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Now I want you to consider the bearing of these two lives, the egoistic and the altruistic—the life of selfishness and the life of love—on the entire condition of the world. The natural and immediate result of selfishness is utter, hopeless, callous quiescence, contented luxury, absolute neglect. It shuts out the disturbing spectacle of human necessity. In the lower classes it sells its soul for beer or gin. In the upper classes it furnishes its drawing-rooms æsthetically, drinks its costly wines, amasses, if miserly, its sterile accumulations, and, if prodigal, lavishes them on pictures, and bric-a-brac ; nursing in delicious solitude its slothful sym-

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pathies. And in the midst of money squandered without stint, and without second thought, on its own comfort, splendor, luxury, egotism grows impatient and angry if it is asked to help forward any work of munificence in due proportion. It cannot spare one guinea for a single charity or a ruined home. There is something shocking in the heartless indifference of such selfishness, whether in the low-born ruffian, who beats his wife and starves his children to get drunk, or in the callous egoist, who makes his ear deaf to the sufferings of humanity. We speak of the claims of a great city sunk in degradation; we speak of dark, impenetrable, subterranean blackguardism, where men and women live lives less human and less enviable than the brutes,—and indifference cares only to

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talk of the rights of property. We tell selfish worldlings of the drunkard's lair, which, owing to the Christian perfection of our drink trade, are hells upon earth, where the fires of hell often flare upon the hearth;—we point them to the daily record of Courts of Justice, which prove that those homes are full of oaths, and fights, and violence, and weeping, and lying, and stealing, and disease, and *delirium tremens*, and death, with no hope beyond,—and they shrug their shoulders and say that “temperance reformers use such intemperate language.” We tell them of little children trained from infancy in dens of the fallen and the harlot; we tell them of one single society which in only a few years, and working in only a fifth part of England, has already dealt with the cases of 16,703 children,

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mendicant, tortured, isolated, abandoned, starving, exposed, beaten, trained in crime or subjected to other wrongs;—children whose angels behold the face of our Father who is in heaven, and who shall plead trumpet-tongued against this enormously wealthy kingdom and this flourishing Church—and they point, to their own satisfaction, to statistics showing that the state of things in the kingdom is very satisfactory. We point them to the menace of the sky, and bid them listen in time to the mutterings of the storm; we point them to markets glutted by competition of labor; to nations being broken into hostile camps; to the cries of joyless, pleasureless, hopeless solitariness, illumined only by glimpses too often of Satanic excitement—and they shrug their shoulders and say, like Cain,

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“Am I my brother’s keeper?” or, “What is the use of attempting anything?” or, “It will last my time;” or, “It is no concern of mine.”

How are half the efforts for social amelioration, whether in the Legislature, or in the Church, usually met? Men talk of “vested interests,” and they sometimes mean vested interests in men’s ruinous temptations, and the destruction of flesh and blood, of soul and body. They use the proud name of “liberty,” and think that liberty demands the right of every man freely to destroy himself and to be a curse to his neighbors; they have learned to deride all restrictive legislation as “grandmotherly.” They proclaim the blessing of inactivity and *laissez faire*. *Laissez faire* means “to do nothing and to let nothing be done”; it means to lay on

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men's shoulders heavy burdens, and to rail at those who would remove them ; it means to do nothing ourselves, but to sneer at those who are in earnest. Yes, *laissez faire* leaves the upright to be the prey of the dishonest ; leaves the ignorant to the mercy of the designing ; leaves the weak to the snares of the tempter ; leaves the swindler to scheme self-enrichment at the cost of the widow's bread ; leaves the professional gambler to dupe to their yearly ruin tens of thousands of fools ; leaves the professional slanderer to scatter over the defenceless his arrows of death ; leaves everyone who makes a profit out of human weakness to get on, and then honors him for his riches ; leaves all the open sores of a corrupt civilization, and accepts as a matter of course the wreckage, and anarchy, and sin, in hu-

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man souls. That is practical wisdom; that is intellectual supremacy; to act so as to be a sensible citizen!

Now the unselfish life, the life of Christian charity, is opposed to all this. Though all the journals, religious and irreligious, respectable and disreputable, misrepresent and sneer at it, it will try every method in its power—legislative, social, ecclesiastical, individual—whereby it may in any way alleviate the sorrows or reverse the wrongs of the world. It is invincibly hopeful; it is undauntedly courageous; it “believes in the soul, and is very sure of God”; it is full of Divine enthusiasm; it leaps amid the laughter of the world into the flaming chariot of zeal, and shakes loosely the slack reins. The world sneers at its theories as visionary and at its efforts as utopian; and it

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answers to the children of this world, "Utopia is only another name for doom." The world and those of the world call its votaries "faddists," and it answers that its fads are aimed at the destruction of mammon worship and monstrous selfishness. The world brands Christian enthusiasts as "fanatics," but they prefer the fanaticism that strives to let the oppressed go free, to the immoral indifference which from the safe shore of its own luxury watches the struggles of the perishing in the bottomless slough of despair, or in the boisterous sea of calamity, and will neither man a lifeboat, nor fling a lifebuoy, nor stretch out a helping hand. Oh! if there ever was a time when there was a need to regard life as a mission of duty it is in London, and toward the close of this nineteenth

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century. We are living in the vastest city of which the world has ever dreamed; vaster and wealthier incomparably than Tyre, or Nineveh, or Babylon, or Byzantium. And in this city, in its dark depths, there lies concealed an awful Erebus of wickedness. Even as the great lumps of bitumen are ever rising from the Dead Sea waves, which "reflect the heavens from their surface and hide Gomorrah in their depths," so in this great city we are constantly shocked—now by some fearful murder, now by some tragedy of unspeakable anguish, now by the bitter cry of the outcast, now by the proof of the innate depravity of the human heart even under circumstances apparently most favorable, now by signs of wickedness, widespread and irrevocable. How shall we grapple with this

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overwhelming mass of idolatry and evil? I will not think of attempting to touch this evening on the many ways in which the work can be done, but I will say, that there are some, thank God! who are grappling with it. Everywhere the work is being attempted by the clergy, and by those who help their work. The poor in many parishes are treated as brethren, and as free men and women, for whom, with all their faults, Christ died. I believe that but for the work for good that is daily going on in hundreds of our parishes, there would be in London ere long such a flood of immorality and distress as would within ten years shake this whole kingdom to its foundation with revolution, and plunge it into irretrievable despair. And it is a subsidiary yet important work of these

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parishes that they help multitudinous agencies banded together to alleviate special forms of distress, and try to grapple with special forms of evil.

My friends, can we do nothing? We can help in many ways. We can help in our parishes, and render possible the cultivation of at least one corner of the vineyard. We can always contribute to the offertory in proportion to our means. We can keep our ears open to the cry of the perishing. We can make it the unvarying law of our lives to live for others. We can remember the teaching of Christ, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them: for this is the law and the prophets."

V

LESSONS FROM THE BIRDS AND THE LILIES

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”—ST. MATT. vi. 25.

THIS church, decorated from kind gifts by kind hands with the signs of harvest, this corn, these fruits, these flowers of autumn, remind us that another year has rolled round upon its varied course; that again the harvest is past and the summer is ended; and that once more it is our solemn duty, as I trust it is also our real happiness, to thank God that He has crowned our year with His goodness, that His clouds

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have dropped fatness, that He has prepared our corn, and so has provided for the earth.

In previous years I have striven to show you how deep that gratitude should be. This year let us rather dwell on our Lord's teaching about the way of regarding and using these His bounteous blessings. But let us at once uplift our hearts to Him in silent thanksgiving, remembering that He graciously is pleased to love and accept these our acknowledgments. "Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoreth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation right will I show the salvation of God."

You all know, I trust, almost by heart that lovely and rhythmic passage of the Sermon on the Mount from which my text is taken. You are also,

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doubtless, all of you aware that the words "take no thought" did not, when the Bible was translated in the reign of King James, mean what they now mean—never pass a thought upon, be wholly indifferent to; but that they meant, as in our admirable Revised Version, "be not overanxious, be not overcareful about." To "take no thought for the morrow," in the *present* sense of the phrase, would be at once impracticable and immoral. It would be as much against the precepts of the Old as of the New Testament; it would be contrary to the clear practice both of our Lord and of His apostles. The passage in past ages has often been abused into an excuse for worthless idleness, for the slothful self-indulgence of false monks, the pernicious mendicancy of pretended fanatics. The perversion was inex-

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cusable. No man has any right to live on the toil of his neighbors; no man has a right to be a useless burden on others; no man, unless he be utterly base, will sit down at the banquet of life, and then meanly rise up and go away while he tries to shirk the payment of the reckoning.

I need hardly pause to correct this abuse. I trust that all of us, of every rank, and of every age, have learned the dignity of work, the innocence of work, the holiness of work, the happiness of work. I trust that the very poorest of you has a healthy scorn for idleness and uselessness,—for the unprofitable life of the beggar, the drunkard, the vagabond, and the tramp—those mere prowlers who fatten on the industry of a society of which they are the worst specimens and the constant curse. I trust that

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the most ignorant has also risen above the willful error of those who chose to think that these words had abrogated the primary law of Eden, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat;" or had nullified the richest promise of futurity, "Now that thy work is over, enter into thy rest."

But while we thus guard this passage from a wrong meaning, let us be careful, very careful, that we do not rob it of *all* meaning. There is, perhaps, no part of Scripture which we are more tempted to praise, while we scarcely even attempt to practice, than the Sermon on the Mount. It is so transcendent, so ideally noble; it is so unspeakably superior to the prudential egotisms of worldly wisdom; it comes to us so completely as a melody out of a better and purer world, that we are too apt to ad-

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mire and to forget it;—to glorify it as a picture, instead of using it as a chart. After dwelling on its music and its poetry, we carefully proceed to explain it all away. “Take no thought, be not anxious”—strange exhortation! How many nominal Christians even pretend to follow it? Go forth into these roaring, surging streets, and how many are there of these careworn myriads, except here and there some happy boy or girl, who are not full of a restless and devouring anxiety about the concerns of this life? In one form or another they are all caring for, and are all anxious about, this brief day, which in an hour or two shall plunge into irrevocable night. They know that at the best they have but a few years to live, and those full of sorrow; yet they are madly absorbed in the desire to gain things

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which even for this brief space cannot satisfy. They are madly absorbed in chasing bubbles; in weaving spider's webs; in hewing broken cisterns; in giving their labors to the caterpillar—bewildered by the very intensity of their desire to win that which does not, and cannot, profit even for the brief span and ever-deepening twilight of these our saddened earthly days. Yes, and they will maintain it to you, that so it *ought* to be; that in this, to them unintelligible, world they could not possibly get on without scraping and dubious dealing; that, as they phrase it, “business is business;” that the Sermon on the Mount is too romantic, too angelical, for the warehouse and the street; and that the Heaven which is so near to us, since we all may enter it, is impossibly far away, because so very few

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of us do. And thus the voice, the human voice, the still small voice of Jesus on the hill, becomes to us but like the half-remembered echo of music out of some heavenly dream. We visit the scenes of the Saviour's earthly life. We stand, as I have myself stood, on the very spot where the words were uttered. The fowls of the air still fly around us, as when He was there; the roller-bird still flashes like a living sapphire through the flowering oleanders; the kingfisher still keenly watches the water from the plumed reeds beside the stream; the white wings of the pelicans still ripple the azure crystal of the lake; the eagle still soars overhead in the transparent air; and underfoot the flowers, still in their vernal bloom, surpass Solomon in all his glory. The pastures are still brilliant with the golden

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amaryllis; the scarlet anemones still glow like flame amid the springing corn; the lilies still breathe forth their delicate incense; the anthers of the crocus still bloom with vegetable gold. Ah yes, the fair world is unaltered; the sky is there; the hill is there; the lake is there; the flowers are there; the birds are there; and Hermon still upheaves his shining shoulder into the blue sky; and the father snows of Lebanon are still crimson with the setting sun. But where is He? To many of you, my brethren, if you will confess the truth, has not that awful, that gracious figure of the Son of Man, seated upon the mountain slope, faded away into a sea of darkness? Does not the voice sound to you like the dim-remembered story out of half-legendary days? Has not the English poet only too truly echoed

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the misgivings of many hearts when he wrote——

“ Now He is dead ; far hence He lies,
In the lorn Syrian town,
And on His grave with shining eyes
The Syrian stars look down ” ?

But, my brethren, why is this ? Is it not chiefly because the world is in our hearts ; because the world is ever with us ; because it has thoroughly got possession of us and mastered us ; because in getting and spending we are almost all of us laying waste our powers ? Are we not ever, and almost exclusively, thinking of this world ? are we not mastered, most of us, by scrambling selfishness and the eager greed of our mere animal or earthly instincts ? How many of us rise, and how often, even for a single day, do we rise out of the petty shiver-

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ing egotism of our personal desires? Whence has this blight of unreality fallen so densely over the fair fields of Gospel teaching? Is it not because of the sooty and sensual elements of artificial life which have blackened the air of the heaven which we have suffered it to obliterate?

And this is partly due to the fact that we have become so dead to Nature; for the voice of Nature is none other than the voice of God.

Our Lord Himself tried to teach us that God whom we call so far away and so distant from us, is very near, and is speaking to us all day long. We think ourselves, perhaps, very pious, very evangelical, very orthodox, if with narrow literalism and stupid superstition we profess to obey, and do not obey, the words of a collection of books

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written hundreds of years ago, as though they were the only Voice in which God ever had spoken, or which ever could speak to us; and these books we chiefly use to show the sins and heresies, not of ourselves, but of our neighbors; and all the while we lose the whole significance of our Saviour's lessons from other books of God, and from that book of God whose secret lies ever open to the eyes of all who will read it. The reason why we understand great parts of the Sermon on the Mount even worse than we understand most parts of Scripture is because they are full of nature and natural images. Men of the world, men who are earthly and sensual, men of vulgar and corroded hearts, "men full of meat, whom most God's heart abhors," smile with dull superiority at

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lessons drawn from such thoroughly unpractical and uncommercial things as lilies and sparrows. Their chief view of birds is of things to be shot at; and as for flowers, their apathy is best expressed by the words of the poet——

“ A primrose by a river’s brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.”

And thus they realize the truth of the apprehension, that a land which practically becomes to men without birds and without flowers, becomes also a land without prayers, without angels, and without songs—a dull, dead blank of business and of selfishness, of mammon and of lust.

And yet, in that very book which we profess to believe, and by which we profess to be exclusively guided, exactly in the two places where God is repre-

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sented as speaking most immediately to man, He rebukes this stolid blindness and deafness to His message in nature. When, in the book of Job, God “answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said”—what spake He of? Spake He about scholastic definitions of the Trinity? or about transubstantiation of the elements of the Eucharist? or about justification by faith? or about evangelicalism, or sacerdotalism, or any other of man’s fantastic and self-righteous *isms*? Look for yourselves, and see whether He spake not of far other things. He spake not only of the lightning and the thunder, not only of the stars and sea, not only of “the arch of the dayspring and the fountains of the dawn,” not only even of “Behemoth trampling the forests and Leviathan tempesting the seas,” but also of the

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goodly wings of the peacock, and of the eagle on her mountain crag. And when, on the green hill by the lake, Jesus “opened His mouth, and taught them, saying”—what did He teach those listening multitudes? Was it about theology? Was it about the petty verbal distinctions which exacerbate the hearts, and cleave asunder the sects of quarrelling Christendom? Or was it, as you have heard to-day, about the fowls of the air, which neither sow nor reap; and about the lilies, which “toil not, neither do they spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”? Turn to the book of Job, turn to the gospel of St. Matthew—those, at any rate, are facts which you can verify for yourselves, and which I suppose that hardly one of you will venture to deny.

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“Why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies.” Very beautiful, you say, very poetical! A hermit might repeat those words, living on herbs in the desert of the Thebais; but is it not—to express the real thought of many—is it not mere pious extravagance, when addressed to us hungry men who are not in pastoral Eden, but are struggling and pushing each other about in these huge, foggy, toilsome cities? No, my brethren, it is not pious extravagance; but if you will take it rightly and understand it truly, it has for everyone of us sweet, homely, practical truth. You are not bidden, observe, to do nothing for yourselves; but you are bidden, while doing what lies in yourselves, to put your whole trust and confidence in God. You must till the earth, and sow, and reap,

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and toil ; and, in one form or other, with your head or with your hands, you must earn your own bread by the sweat of your brow. That is God's primary law ; yet but for God's gift, not an ear of corn would grow ; and in giving you the corn, God would fain teach you at the same time that the living is more than life, and the body than raiment. God makes us directly dependent upon His mighty power ; but to show that His power is all love, He stamps the gift with His own Divine seal, and He countersigns it with His own immediate autograph, His autograph of beauty. This marvellous coincidence of beauty and utility, so that the ornament of nature is but another aspect of her work :—so that by a Divine, preëstablished harmony, the sun which gives us light and heat gives also air and

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cloud the glories of sapphire and amber, of rainbow and of flame; so that the flower, which gives us fruit, may give us also "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears;" so that the water, which is the proper element to quench the thirst of man and beast, is always lovely, whether it glimmer in the dew-drop, or gleam in the rainbow, or hang in fleeces of fire and amethyst amid the evening clouds—this identity, I say, of use and beauty, of ministry and glory, is, whether as a veil or as a revelation, the most striking sign of the immediate presence and infinite love of God. And this was the lesson—the love of God, as shown in the loveliness of His works—which the Lord meant to emphasize when He pointed those poor listening multitudes to the flowers of the field.

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In pointing to them once, He points
them to us forever—to the poppy,
robed in Solomonian purple——

“Livelier than Melibœan, or the grain of Sarra,
worn by kings and heroes old in time of truce;”

to the spring hyacinths, which you will
all see sprinkled like dust of sapphires
in woodland walks; to the daisy, dear
type of humility, with its pure star of
ruby and white and gold; to the pink
and fragrant snow of the apple-blossom
and the May; to the primroses, clustered
in their green firmament like galaxies
of stars; to the stubborn thistles, burst-
ing into voluptuous purple; to the
moss, with its lustrous jewelery; to
the lichen, with its many-colored stains;
to the Rose of Sharon; to the lily of
the valley; to the soft green grass; to
the rolling billows of golden corn——

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these, in their humbleness, in their joyful serenity, and in their “unimaginable fantasies of balm and bloom,” say silently to us, “We, like all things else, are God’s gift to you ; and we tell you, in multitudinous voices, that God is good.” And our blessed Lord said, “Why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Behold the lilies.” “GOD IS LOVE:” that is what they say to you, and “as thy day is, so shall thy strength be.” And the only proper feeling as regards them all is that which made the Swedish botanist Linnæus—as he gazed on the intermingled glories of gold and purple in the gorse and heather ablaze under the noonday sunlight—kneel down in an ecstasy of tears and joy, and thank God then and there on the green turf, under the open day, for the richness of His gifts.

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And, again, He said, "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink. Behold the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap, and your heavenly Father feedeth them." Might not this exquisite illustration have furnished its own antidote against misrepresentation by the idle and the worthless? "God feedeth them;" but do they do nothing for themselves? Why, they toil incessantly! The whole joy of the life of the bird of heaven is in its eager industry for material ends. When you see the swallow reflecting the sea-blue light from its wings, do you think that its darting hither and thither is but a flashing sport? Have you ever looked at a kestrel, now soaring high in air, now wheeling round and round in ever-narrowing circles, now facing the wind

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in quivering poise with its paired half-moon wings, then dashing with one swoop upon its prey? Have you not all sometimes watched the sea-gulls as, uttering their plaintive wail, with the slow waft of their white wings, they hover above the surge? Or have you seen the gannet hurling itself down like a thunderbolt from its prependicular height to strike some fish which its keen eye sees glittering deep under the waves? Or if, pent up in these stifling cities with their smoke-poisoned air, we cannot see these, we need not go very far to learn a lesson from the pigeons, with the lustre as of amethyst bathed in emerald on their shining necks, as they seek the food which man's kindness gives them; or, at any rate, the numberless city sparrows, humblest and most despised of God's creatures—very

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street Arabs among the birds—of which yet not one falleth to the ground without our Father's will. Did Jesus, then, point to the birds of the air as though they set you an example of greedy dependence or of lazy sloth? Nay, not so. "That which He giveth them they gather; He openeth His hand, and they"—unanxious about the morrow, guided by unreflecting instinct, but still toiling for what God gives—"are filled with good."

The simplicity of a beautiful and trustful instinct looks not in vain to God. "That little fellow," said Luther of a bird going to roost, "has chosen his shelter, and is quietly rocking himself to sleep without a care of to-morrow's lodging, calmly holding on to his little twig, and leaving God to think of him." And thus, what Christ would

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tell us is, that the flowers, by the Divine hieroglyphics of their ephemeral beauty, teach us that God loves us; and the birds, by their divinely implanted instinct of strenuous trust, in every varying light upon their plumage, and in every beat of their quivering wing, and in every warbled melody of their natural joy, say to us, "Fear not; be not anxious. Your heavenly Father feedeth us; and are not ye of much more value than we are, of more value than many sparrows?"

Here, then, are some of the lessons of this passage: "Do your work, but do it in quietness and confidence; do your duty, but do it without this corroding anxiety; and He who even in the desert spreads His table for the birds, He who clothes the flowers in their embroideries of beauty, will feed and

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clothe you. That trust which unconsciously God's humbler creatures show, that do ye show reflectingly and consciously. Trust in God for these lower things, because He gives and will give, and has given to you, higher things than these. Do not degrade and drag down your life in the mire by the spirit of mean, selfish, grudging, untrustful accumulation. If you seek first the kingdom of God, all these other things, or things transcendently better than these, shall be added unto you. There is nothing wrong in your trade, and your merchandise, and your daily work to earn your own living; that is altogether right; so far from being a rival business to these, the seeking of the kingdom of heaven is a Divine law which should regulate, a Divine temper which should pervade and transfigure

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them. Only, for the sake of your own souls, for the sake of all that makes life worth living, for the sake alike of your temporal and eternal happiness, do not seek the dross of earth more, and love it better, than the gold of heaven. Let conscience and faith enter into every necessary act of your daily life. Learn to discriminate the transcendant. Learn to feel habitually that the life, the true life, the spiritual life, is more than food, and the body than raiment. Let justice, goodness, kindness, purity, be your aim ; not the selfish scramble of scheming competition, not the brutal appetencies of sensual desire. Do not let your daily necessities blunt the edge of your ideal aspirations ; do not sink into grovelling appetites or money-making machines. Man lives indeed by bread, but he does not live by bread *alone*."

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Two classes of interests daily appeal to you with intense persistence, the lower and the higher, the earthly and the Divine. On the one side money, self-importance, power, comfort, pleasure, grasp you with the attraction of their nearness and their coarse reality; on the other hand, calling to you as with sweet, far voices from the invisible world, are grace, contentment, trust, duty, thankfulness for undeserved mercies, a desire to give not to receive, to spend and be spent for the good of others and not merely for your own. You thank God for the harvest; thank Him far more for your redemption, for your immortality, for Him who is the bread of life. "He who cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he who believeth on Me shall never thirst." That is Christ's message to you to-day. Let

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us take it with us, and do not let our harvest thanksgiving be hollow and insincere. And now and always, let us beware lest our mean and useless accumulations supersede our active and blessed charities.

But oh, above all, ere it be too late, ere for us the very meaning of life be over, let us give *ourselves*, our souls and bodies, a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice. In doing so, our public worship may be no small help to us. Often and often it may remind us of sacred realities; often and often it may recall us from wandering ways. If it does not do this for us, it is nothing; it is nothing then but an empty form, nothing but a passing excitement. Oh, to rescue it from such a dishonor, let me entreat you all to come here in a humble, faithful, reverent spirit, thinking of

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God and thinking of death ; knowing that, if you are living without God, your life is but a living death, and that with Him your very death will but be a more immortal life ! And to this end let me entreat everyone of you, at every service in the church, to make it *your* service. Do not come to look on, but to take part. Do not come to listen to prayers, but to pray. Do not come to hear hymns, but to join in them with heart and voice. Do not come in with irreverent carelessness or with rude manners to God, and crowd out before the blessing is pronounced. Into services, which would otherwise be tedious and dead, flash the lightning of genuine sincerity and the enthusiasm of intense belief. So will the lesson which Christ taught you from the birds and the lilies, the lesson of unworldliness and

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of absolute trust in the Word of God, be deepened by lessons which shall come to you immediately and overwhelmingly from the Spirit of God speaking inwardly to your very hearts. So will you rise, perhaps for the first time in your lives, above the fret and faithlessness of worldly anxieties and the meanness of worldly aims. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

THE END.

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